THE CHILLING ARCHIVES OF HORROR COMICS!™

HAUNTED HORROR

MADAM CLIZIA

#32

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MADAM CLIZIA
UNDER THE CERULEAN WAVES OF THE OCEAN OR THE (BRRR!) DARK WATERS OF AN UNPREPOSSESSING LAKE, LURK ALL SORTS OF MONSTERS: SHARK-FINNED DEMONS, BLOBBY GKMLOOOMS (I DIDN'T FALL ASLEEP ON THE KEYBOARD: THAT'S THE CORRECT SPELLING), DECEPTIVELY ALLURING SEA HAGS, AND OTHER HUNGRY, TENTACLED CREATURES. HOLD YOUR BREATH AND JUMP IN WITH ME. I'LL GIVE YOU A ONE-WAY TOUR OF MY WATERY GRAVE!
Art by
Drazen Kozjan
drazen

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BEWARE WHAT YOU DO UNTO OTHERS, BECAUSE IT MIGHT COME BACK TO *BITE* YOU IN THE...

The Metamorphosis of the GKMLOOOMS

On one seemingly ordinary day, out of the thrashing, convulsive depths of the murky waters -- there emerged the most terrible scourge ever to befall mankind! The ghastly, ghoulish, blood-congealing *GKMLOOOMS!*

WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME? AM I GOING MAD? PERHAPS THIS IS ALL A NIGHTMARE OF MY WATER-LOGGED BRAIN, WHILE EVEN NOW-- I'M DROWNING!

Worlds of Fear #3, March 1952. George Evans. Fawcett.

ARCHER COMMANGER FLEXED HIS POWERFUL BICEPS AND EXPOSED HIS INCREDIBLY WELL DEVELOPED TORSO TO THE INTENT YELLOW FACES OF THE SPECTATORS.

---THE WORLD'S MOST ADVANCED HUMAN SPECIMEN!

Archer Commanger

ONCE AGAIN – IN THE COURSE OF HIS WORLD TOUR -- MR. COMMANGER WILL DEMONSTRATE SOME OF THE FABULOUS FEATS THAT HAVE EARNED HIM THIS UNPRECEDENTED TITLE! WATCH CLOSELY -- FOR YOU ARE WITNESSING -- HISTORY!

DONNA, THE ESCAPE ARTIST'S PARTNER PERFORMER, EXQUISITE AND PROVOCATIVE IN THE SKIMPY THEATRICAL TIGHTS, DRAMATICALLY DESCRIBED THE NATURE OF THE FEAT AS THE JAPANESE INTERPRETER TRANSLATED HER WORDS!

HE WILL DESCEND INTO THE DEEP WATERS, BOUND BY CHAINS, AND REMAIN THERE FOR SIX MINUTES BEFORE HE ASCENDS---UNFETTERED!

ARCHER-- BE CAREFUL-- FOR ME!

WE'VE DONE THIS IN LONDON, PARIS, MADRID -- EVERYWHERE! AND STILL YOU WORRY, DARLING! IT WILL BE JUST AS EASY HERE -- IN JAPAN!

SPLASH!

PLUNGED INTO THE MURKY WATERS, HIS BODY, HEAVILY WEIGHTED BY CHAINS – WENT DOWN AND DOWN! HE MADE TO UNDO THEM QUICKLY, TO PREPARE FOR HIS EXTRAORDINARY IMMERSION!

THE EFFORT TO GET CLEAR OF THESE CHAINS CUTS MY SUB-MERSION CAPACITY ABOUT A FULL MINUTE!

--UHH-- THERE!

SOMETHING HAS GRABBED HOLD OF MY LEG! I-I CAN'T SHAKE LOOSE!

IT'S PULLING ME DOWN! FEELS LIKE-- A HAND!

THIS KNIFE I TUCKED AWAY FOR EMERGENCIES! IT'S MY ONLY CHANCE!

GOT TO KEEP CUTTING AT IT -- UNTIL IT-- RELEASES ME!

HE SLASHED AGAIN AND AGAIN INTO THE YIELDING FLESH - BUT STILL HIS ATTACKER RETAINED AN UNRELENTING HOLD! HE STRUGGLED WITH THE STRANGE MASS AND SLOWLY FELT HIS SENSES REELING!

I-I CAN'T FIGHT IT OFF... I...

SOME TIMELESS MOMENTS LATER, HE BLINKED HIS EYES OPEN CAUTIOUSLY, BEWILDEREDLY, AND ---

I-I'M IMPRISONED IN A GLASS-LIKE SPHERE!

T-THERE'S NO WAY OUT! THE ROOM OUTSIDE IS MADE OF A STRANGE METALLIC SUBSTANCE I'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE!

COMMANGER GIRDED HIMSELF FOR A PRODIGIOUS EXPENDITURE OF STRENGTH-- AND HE CRASHED AT THE GLASS-LIKE WALL!

UUHHH! N-NOTHING HAPPENED!

GOT TO TRY IT AGAIN --- UNHHH! IT'S CRACKING!

WHOOSSHHH!

WATER---! THE ROOM WAS FULL OF IT!

THE DEMOLISHED GLOBE LEFT HIM AT THE MERCY OF THE ONRUSHING WATERS, GASPING AND CHOKING HELPLESSLY. AT THE LAST INSTANT, WHEN HE KNEW HE MUST EXPIRE---

I-I'M DROWNING! T-THE DOOR-- IT'S OPENING!

AND THROUGH THE DOOR--A GHASTLY, FANTASTIC FORM APPROACHED, ANOTHER GLOBE IN ITS POSSESSION. THE CREATURE WAS A ROTUND, AMORPHOUS MASS, WITH MULTIPLE ARMS, LEGS, EYES, SET IN A BLOOD-CONGEALING CHAOS ALL OVER ITS MISSHAPEN FIGURE!

I-IT'S NO ANIMAL! AT LEAST NONE I'VE EVER SEEN! UHH! I FEEL AS THOUGH I'M BEING SUCKED INTO A VACUUM!

COMMANGER'S BODY SET INSIDE, THE CREATURE PRESSED AGAINST THE GLOBE AND STUDIED THE SHOCKED PERFORMER!

THE LIMBS AND EYES ARE HUMAN-- AND IT'S MADE OF HUMAN FLESH!

I-I MUST BE GOING MAD! MAYBE THIS IS A NIGHTMARE OF MY WATER-LOGGED BRAIN--WHILE EVEN NOW, I'M DROWNING!

THE BALL'S MOVING--THE THING'S CARRYING ME OUT!

BORNE THROUGH A FABULOUS NETWORK OF CORRIDORS, ARCHER COMMANGER DISCOVERED HIMSELF IN ---

--A WATER-FREE ROOM! AND IT'S TAKING ME OUT! NOW--TO GET AT IT, AND---

--OVER-POWER IT!

HE LUNGED DESPERATELY AT THE UNWORLDLY CREATURE, SMASHING AT IT! IT FELL OVER UNDER HIS FURIOUS ONSLAUGHT!

I-I'M STRONGER THAN IT! THEN I STILL HAVE A CHANCE!

OTHERS! HORRIBLE VARIATIONS OF THE SAME SPECIES!

I-I'LL HAVE TO FIGHT THEM OFF! BUT THEY'RE NOT MOVING! THEY JUST STAND THERE -- A-AND STARE AT ME WITH THOSE TERRIBLE EYES!

BUT AS THEY STARED AT HIM, AN INDEFINABLE POWER OVERWHELMED COMMANGER--ROOTING HIM IMMOVABLY--COMPLETELY SUBDUING HIM!

THEY'RE COMMUNICATING WITH ME, BUT I HEAR NO SPOKEN VOICE--NO SOUND! IT-IT'S MENTAL TELEPATHY--MESSAGES SENT BY BRAIN WAVE PATTERNS! UNCANNY!

VIOLENCE WILL AVAIL YOU NOTHING! YOU MUST HEED US!

IT WAS ALL BEYOND COMPREHENSION! THEN THE OBVIOUS LEADER TOLD THE FEAR-FATIGUED PERFORMER THE MOST INCREDIBLE STORY EVER HEARD BY MORTAL MAN!

WE ARE FLESH LIKE YOUR FLESH! A VIOLENT HUMANITY HAS CREATED US--AND NOW WE SHALL ABSORB THIS SAME HUMANITY!

I-I DON'T UNDERSTAND! WHAT'S GOING ON? WHERE AM I?

YOU ARE BENEATH THE CITY OF HIROSHIMA!

--HIROSHIMA! THE PLACE WHERE THE ATOMB BOMB WAS DROPPED!

YES! THE BOMB CAUSED HAVOC WITH THE NERVES AND GENES OF SOME OF THE SURVIVORS!

AND SUKI GKMLOOOM, BORN OF A SURVIVOR, WAS A MANY-ORBED AND LIMBED, AMORPHOUS MASS -- BUT A SUPER-HUMAN BEING! THE FIRST GKMLOOOM!

WE ARE BRILLIANT! INVULNERABLE! AND WE REACH FULL MATURITY IN A MATTER OF MONTHS!

OH, NO! THEN YOU MUST HAVE MULTIPLIED INTO THE THOUSANDS!

REMOVE HIM TO THE LABORATORY!

--NO!

LET ME GO! ---PLEASE---! LET ME GO!

--THEY HOLD ME CAPTIVE BY SOMETHING WITHIN THEMSELVES! SOME WEIRD POWER! THEIR THINKING MAKES IT SO! IT MUST BE BRAIN IMPULSES!

--STRAP HIM DOWN!

NO! NO! WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO TO ME?

WE ARE READY TO START ABSORBING THE HUMAN RACE. WE ARE EXPERIMENTING TO FIND A WAY TO CHANGE EXISTING HUMANS INTO GKMLOOOMS BY MINUTE ATOMIC EXPLOSIONS IN THE SYSTEMS!

--B-BUT WHY PICK ON ME?

YOU WERE CHOSEN AS THE FIRST HUMAN TO UNDERGO THIS – BECAUSE AS THE MOST ADVANCED HUMAN SPECIMEN, YOUR SYSTEM WILL BE ABLE TO WITHSTAND GREATER SHOCK!

NO! IT--IT WAS JUST AN ACT!

THE HUGE, FANTASTIC EQUIPMENT WAS CAREFULLY ALIGNED AND AIMED AT THE STRUGGLING AND SCREAMING FIGURE HELPLESSLY STRAPPED TO THE APPARATUS TABLE. AT A GIVEN SIGNAL, THE GKMLOOOMS APPLIED A CONTINUOUS CHAIN OF ELECTRICAL SHOCKS THAT WAS EXCRUCIATING AGONY TO ARCHER COMMANGER!

..CONTINUE THE TREATMENT!

AIEEEEEEE!

WHAT SEEMED LIKE AN ETERNITY LATER, THEY RELEASED THE TORTURED PERFORMER AND RETURNED HIM TO HIS GLOBULAR CELL-HOVERING ON THE BRINK OF CONSCIOUSNESS-

THERE WILL BE A SERIES OF MANY TREATMENTS. THIS IS ONLY THE FIRST!

OHHH... OHHHHH!

I--I'LL NEVER SURVIVE ANOTHER ONE! I'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE NOW--OR NEVER!

I--I FEEL STRANGE! THE PAIN IS GONE! I SEEM TO HAVE REGAINED MY STRENGTH! I HAVE AN URGE TO---

CRAAASSHH!

THE WATER DOESN'T SEEM TO EFFECT ME ANY LONGER! MAYBE I CAN MAKE IT OUT OF HERE TO THE TOP BEFORE THEY GET AT ME!

COMMANGER WAS TOO INTENT UPON HIS PURPOSE OF ESCAPE TO GIVE ANY THOUGHT TO THE STRANGE SENSATION THAT HAD SUDDENLY COME OVER HIM! HE PUSHED HIS WAY THROUGH ROOM AFTER ROOM, CORRIDOR AFTER CORRIDOR--AND THEN, AT LAST-- HE BROKE FOR THE WATER'S SURFACE!

I--I MADE IT! IT'S IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT! AN ENTIRE DAY HAS PASSED!

I--I'VE GOT TO GET TO THE HOTEL--TO DONNA!

COMMANGER MADE HIS WAY THROUGH THE DESOLATED STREETS IN A STRANGE STUPOR. INTERMITTENT RUSHES OF CLARITY AND DENSITY CAME INEXPLICABLY OVER HIM. HE MADE HIS WAY UP A SIDE ENTRANCE TO DONNA'S HOTEL ROOM, AND THEN ---

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W-WHO'S THERE? WHO'S AT THE DOOR?

AIEEEE! AIEEEEE!

AS THE SCREAM OF STARK TERROR TORE FROM HER LIPS, COMMANGER STARTED TO SAY SOMETHING, BUT HE COULD NOT! IT WAS THEN HE CAUGHT A GLIMPSE OF HIMSELF IN THE VANITY MIRROR!

I--- IT CAN'T BE! I--I'M A GKMLOOOM!

THEY CHANGED ME! IT HAPPENED SOONER THAN THEY ANTICIPATED! THAT'S WHY I WAS ABLE TO ESCAPE SO EASILY! SOMEHOW I MUST LET HER KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENED!

THE STUNNED BRAIN OF THE PANICKED GIRL SOUGHT AN ESCAPE FROM THE UNEARTHLY SIGHT-- AND DONNA LAPSED INTO UNCONSCIOUSNESS. THE TRANSFORMED COMMANGER WAS MOMENTARILY IMMOBILIZED BY SPASMS OF HORROR! THEN ---

HOW CAN I LET HER KNOW? OH--DONNA, DONNA, MY DEAREST!

I HAVE IT! I CAN STILL WRITE! I MUST TELL HER ALL!

HE FRANTICALLY SOUGHT PAPER AND A PENCIL --AND THEN, HE ATTEMPTED TO WRITE! BUT HE COULD NOT! HIS MIND BECAME OBFUSCATED!

A--A CHANGE IS HAPPENING IN MY MIND, TOO! SOON--IT WILL BE TOO LATE! I'LL BE LOST FOREVER!

SUDDENLY--PROMPTED BY IMPULSES STRONGER THAN HIMSELF--HE STOOD ERECT AND GRABBED FOR DONNA'S STRUGGLING, HYSTERICAL FIGURE!

LET ME GO! LET ME GO! AIEEEEE!

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THERE? IT SOUNDS LIKE MURDER!

BREAK THE DOOR DOWN!

OH, NO! UHHH...

GOOD LORD!

IT'S SOMETHING OUT OF HADES!

SUMMON THE POLICE!

BYSTANDERS FLED IN TERROR! THE STREETS ALONG HIS PATH OF FLIGHT WERE A BEDLAM OF CRINGING, COWERING MEN AND HYSTERICALLY WEEPING WOMEN. COMMANGER NO LONGER KNEW WHAT HE WAS DOING. HE MADE FOR THE WATER, AND ...

SPLASH!

WHEN NEXT COMMANGER OPENED HIS EYES AND EXPERIENCED A RARE LUCID MOMENT, HE WAS IN A HUGE, CAVERNOUS SUBTERRANEAN EXPANSE, ONE OF THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS OF GKMLOOOMS!

W-WHAT'S HAPPENING? THEY'RE GATHERED TOGETHER-- AS THOUGH WAITING FOR SOME WORD OR SIGNAL!

ALL IN READINESS! OUR PURPOSE IS CLEAR! WE ARE GOING TO ASCEND TO ABSORB AND TRANSFORM ALL OF HUMANITY! THIS IS THE MOMENT WE HAVE LONG AWAITED!

ARCHER COMMANGER'S MIND WAS IN ITS LAST DEATH THROES — RESISTING WITH ALL ITS WEAKENING RESOURCES THE TRANSFORMATION WHICH WAS TO CLAIM HIM UTTERLY — AND FOR ALL TIME! THE PROSPECT OF A CAPTIVE HUMAN RACE — WAS TOO HORRIFYING!

I-I WON'T BE AN INSTRUMENT TO SUCH EVIL! I-I WOULD RATHER DESTROY MYSELF — TO RID MYSELF OF THE CREATURE I HAVE BECOME!

THERE MAY BE A WAY OUT THROUGH THIS SUBTERRANEAN CORRIDOR!

OHHH! ONE OF THEM IS AFTER ME! IT'LL ALARM THE OTHERS!

FEAR IMMOBILIZED COMMANGER, AND THE PURSUING GKMLOOOM CAME UP BESIDE HIM. IT GRASPED ONE OF HIS LIMBS — BUT IT WAS A GESTURE OF TENDERNESS!

Y-YOU ARE NOT GOING TO DO ME HARM---?

NO, ARCHER — I WOULD NEVER DO YOU HARM!

W-WHO ARE YOU? WHY DO YOU TALK TO ME THIS WAY?

IT IS I, MY DARLING — DONNA! COME, TAKE MY HAND AND JOIN THE OTHERS! WE HAVE MUCH TO DO ABOVE!

AND PRESENTLY, IN AN AURA OF OMINOUS SILENCE, THE HORDE OF STRANGE BEINGS EMERGED UPON THE FACE OF THE EARTH. IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME NOW...

Vampire of the DEEP

BANG! BANG!

A WITCH

FLA.

FROM THE DARKEST DEPTHS OF THE SEA COMES A SOB OF DESPAIR---ON THE TOSSING SURFACE, A GLIMPSE OF HATRED AND TERROR THAT FADES IN THE SURGING WAKE! "IMAGINATION!", THE CAPTAIN SCOFFS, AND TURNS AWAY, HIS FACE A TWISTED MASKED OF FEAR---AND YOU KNOW THAT HE, TOO, KNOWS THAT A **VAMPIRE OF THE DEEP** HAS CLAIMED ANOTHER VICTIM!

BEHIND MOST TRAGEDIES LIES A HAPPY BEGINNING! BUT FEW STARTED AS JOYOUSLY AS THIS SUMMER CRUISE---

GET ABOARD, FOLKS---YOU'VE BEEN INVITED ON THIS CRUISE FOR ONE PURPOSE---TO **ENJOY** YOURSELVES!

AHOY, CAP'N MALONE!

BUT WITH THE VANISHING SHORE, THE LAUGHTER ENDED ---FOR ON THE HORIZON, LOOMED **TERROR!**

LOOK, SKIPPER, A **BOAT!** SOMEBODY'S IN **TROUBLE!**

TRUST OLD JANSEN'S SEA LORE, CAPTAIN! ABANDON THIS MYSTERIOUS CASTAWAY---BEFORE IT'S **TOO LATE!**

MY FISHING BOAT SANK THREE DAYS AGO---BEEN DRIFTING---NO FOOD OR WATER---

HMPH! SOMETHIN' FISHY HERE---HE DON'T LOOK LIKE HE AIN'T EATEN FOR THREE DAYS!

Forbidden Worlds #18, June 1953. Lin Streeter. ACG.

BUT DIRK MALONE KNEW ONLY THE UNWRITTEN LAW OF THE SEA---AND THE HELPLESS MAN WAS SAVED!

SINCE YOU'RE A SEAMAN, SALAGUA, YOU CAN WORK AS A CREW MEMBER ON THIS VOYAGE!

THANK YOU, CAPTAIN!

THAT NIGHT, THE MOON LOOKED DOWN ON A PEACEFUL SEA!---ONLY THE HELMSMAN FELT THE SUDDEN DAMP CHILL THAT SWEPT ACROSS THE DECK---

THOUGHT I HEARD A SPLASH--FLYING FISH, PROBABLY---

SUDDENLY---

WH-WHAT'S THAT? NO, NO!

G-GET AWAY ---DON'T---

YARRGH!

IN HIS CABIN, DIRK NOTICED THE WILDLY SWINGING COMPASS---

THAT FOOL MUST HAVE FALLEN ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL!

CAPTAIN! COME QUICKLY!

HOLY SMOKE! EVERY DROP OF BLOOD HAS BEEN DRAINED FROM HIS BODY!

AYE---AN' IT LOOKS LIKE THE WORK OF A---SEA VAMPIRE!

SEA VAMPIRE? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

I'LL TELL YOU, CAP'N---

ONE O' THE LITTLE-KNOWN LEGENDS O' THE SEA TELLS ABOUT THE **SEA VAMPIRES** ---MANLIKE **DEMONS** WHO CRAWL ABOARD SHIPS AN' PREY ON THE CREW!

"THEY'D ATTACK A SHIP WHEN IT BECALMED---"

BREAK OUT THE GUNS, MEN ---**VAMPIRES!**

YARRGH!

"AN' MAYBE LATER, THE DESERTED SHIP WOULD BE DISCOVERED---TO BECOME AN UNSOLVED 'MYSTERY OF THE SEA'---"

HMM---NO SIGN OF TROUBLE ABOARD---BUT THE CREW'S **VANISHED INTO THIN AIR!**

"THE WORST THING ABOUT THOSE SLIMY DEVILS IS THAT THEY LOOK LIKE **MEN**---EXCEPT WHEN SOAKED IN SALT WATER!"

THE SUN---SUCKS THE MOISTURE FROM MY BODY! I TAKE THE HATED **MAN** FORM!

IT IS TIME TO RETURN TO THE COOL SEA--- AND REGAIN YOUR VAMPIRE SHAPE!

AS OLD JANSEN FINISHED HIS GRISLY TALE, A CHILL OF IMPENDING TERROR SWEPT HIS LISTENERS--

NOWADAYS, WITH SO MANY BIG FAST SHIPS, THE SEA VAMPIRES HAVE ABOUT DIED OUT! BUT **SOME** ARE LEFT--

---AN' I THINK THERE'S ONE OF 'EM ABOARD THIS VESSEL ---**WAITIN' TO KILL US ALL---ONE BY ONE!**

LATER···ON THE BRIDGE···

DIRK, AS THE YOUNGER GENERATION OF SAILOR, WHAT DO **YOU** THINK OF THAT SILLY FABLE ABOUT "**SEA VAMPIRES?**"

I ONLY KNOW THAT ALL OF THOSE OLD TALES HAVE A BASIS OF ***FACT!*** AND I'M NOT ONE TO SCOFF, EVE!

BUT···BUT IF ONE OF **US** IS REALLY A VAMPIRE···WHO DO YOU THINK IT IS?

IT ***COULD*** BE ***OLD JANSEN, HIMSELF!*** HE MIGHT HAVE TOLD THAT VAMPIRE STORY TO DRAW SUSPICION TO THE NEW MAN, SALAGUA! I'M GOING TO···

MAN OVERBOARD!

IN THE STERN, A PANICKY GROUP POINTED TO A TINY, STRUGGLING FIGURE···

IT'S **JANSEN!**

I WILL SAVE HIM!

AS SALAGUA DIVED, A FEARFUL THOUGHT TORE AT DIRK'S MIND···

NO, SALAGUA··· **WAIT!**

MAYBE IT'S A ***TRICK!*** JANSEN COULD BE TRYING TO LURE SOMEONE OUT TO HIM···THEN HE'LL···

SEA W

SPLASH!

AT FIRST THE DROWNING MAN DID NOT RECOGNISE HIS RESCUER···

HE··· **SALAGUA**···PUSHED ME OVERBOARD! CAN'T··· LAST MUCH LONGER!

WE'VE GOT TO HEAD OFF SALAGUA BEFORE HE REACHES THAT FIEND!

THEN···AS THE SPEEDING SWIMMER STROKED CLOSER···

YOU! NO···***NO*** ···LET ME ***DROWN!***

THEN A FRENZIED SWIRLING---A FUTILE STRUGGLE FOR LIFE, AND---

FOOL! YOU TALKED TOO MUCH---SEALED YOUR OWN DOOM!

A MOMENT LATER---

WHEN THE BOAT REACHED THE SPOT---

JUST AS I EXPECTED---BOTH OF THEM GONE! POOR SALAGUA---

WHILE, AT THAT MOMENT---

IN A FEW MINUTES, THE WIND WILL HAVE DRIED AWAY THE WATER---I WILL BE A MAN AGAIN--

A FEEBLE SHOUT WAS HEARD---

I DIDN'T REACH JANSEN IN TIME---THE POOR OLD GUY WENT UNDER---

THEN I WAS WRONG ABOUT HIM! MAYBE THERE ISN'T ANY SEA VAMPIRE, AFTER ALL!

DO YOU THINK IT'S POSSIBLE, THEN, THAT THE HELMSMAN WAS KILLED BY A PASSING FLOCK OF VAMPIRE BATS? WE'RE CLOSE TO THE WEST INDIES, YOU KNOW--

OF COURSE! I SHOULD HAVE THOUGHT OF IT!

THAT SEEMED TO BE THE ONLY ANSWER---UNTIL NEXT DAY, WHEN THE MATE HEARD A SCREAM, RUSHED BELOW---

THE SEA VAMPIRE---IT'S REAL!

By the time Dirk reached the spot, the mate, too, was a victim!

HANK···WHO DID IT?

ENGINE ROOM

THE SEA VAMPIRE ···HE'S···DOWN IN THE ENGINE ROOM···

Meanwhile···

THIS HIGH TEMPERATURE WILL DRY ME OFF FAST··· AND CHANGE ME TO A **MAN** AGAIN!

OH···IT'S **YOU**, CAPTAIN! THE VAMPIRE···! HE GOT AWAY FROM ME···MUST BE UP ON DECK!

NOT UNLESS HE CAME THROUGH THIS DOOR··· AND HE **DIDN'T!**

Concealing the sheer horror that clamped his heart, Dirk reached a terrifying conclusion···

THAT SETTLES IT! **SALAGUA IS THE SEA VAMPIRE!** I COULD PROVE IT BY TOSSING A BUCKET OF SEA WATER OVER HIM···BUT THAT MIGHT BE TOO DANGEROUS! I'LL WAIT···

Desperately seeking a plan, Dirk called a meeting···

ONLY WE THREE ARE LEFT ALIVE! WE'LL DIVIDE THE SHIP'S DUTIES UNTIL WE REACH PORT···TODAY, I'LL VOLUNTEER TO **COOK!**

OKAY BY ME!

HE DESERVES ONE GOOD MEAL···FOR IT WILL BE HIS **LAST!** THEY **BOTH DIE TONIGHT!**

Later···

GOOD THING I HAD TO STUDY **FIRST AID** TO GET MY CAPTAIN'S PAPERS···IT MAY SAVE OUR **LIVES!**

HERE'S DINNER---IT'LL PROBABLY **KILL** YOU!

HA! HA! DON'T BE MODEST, CAPTAIN!

Then---AS THE GLOOM OF NIGHT FELL UPON THE TRAGIC VESSEL---

DIRK IS AT THE WHEEL---EVE IN HER CABIN---IT IS TIME TO **STRIKE!**

IF MY PLAN WORKED, THE VAMPIRE SHOULD BE **DEAD** BY NOW, OR---**GREAT SCOTT!** THAT'S EVE---SHE'S IN TROUBLE!

OH, NO-- **HELP!**

SOMETHING WENT WRONG! HE'S---**STILL ALIVE!**

YOU DIE FIRST--- THEN **HIM!**

WITH THE DESPERATE COURAGE OF LOVE, DIRK RUSHED THE FEARSOME MONSTER---

FOOL---DON'T YOU KNOW BY NOW THAT YOUR PUNY MORTAL WEAPONS CANNOT HARM ME? I AM **DEATH-LESS!**

BANG!

BUT AS DIRK FELT THE GATHERING PALL OF DEATH, THE SLIMY FINGERS WEAKENED---

WHAT---HAVE YOU DONE TO ME? THIS FIERY AGONY THAT CONSUMES MY BODY---IT---**ARGH!**

IT'S WORK-ING AT LAST! AND JUST IN THE **NICK OF TIME!**

VAMPIRES ARE VAMPIRES, WHATEVER THEIR FORM! AND **SILVER** IS THE ONE THING THAT WILL KILL THEM! I DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO MAKE A SILVER BULLET-SO INSTEAD, I PUT A FEW DROPS OF THIS **SILVER NITRATE IN HIS FOOD!**

HOWEVER, I FORGOT THAT IT HAS TO BE **DIGESTED** BEFORE REACHING THE BLOOD STREAM! THAT'S WHAT **TOOK SO LONG!**

AND SO---

WELL, HERE WE ARE ---TOGETHER---

AS A SHIP'S CAPTAIN, YOU CAN **MARRY** PEOPLE, I UNDER-STAND---WELL, HOW ABOUT MARRYING **ME?**

THE END!

LURE of the SEA HAG

DICK! DICK COLLINS! COME CLOSER! I'VE BEEN GRANTED THE POWER TO CHANGE TO MY REAL FORM FOR A FEW BRIEF MOMENTS!

THAT--THAT VOICE! I'VE SEARCHED THE WHOLE MUSEUM AND THERE'S NO ONE ELSE HERE! IT-- IT ***MUST*** BE COMING FROM THAT OLD SHIP'S FIGUREHEAD! YET, HOW CAN IT BE?

THE MARINE MUSEUM, LOCATED IN AN ANCIENT SALTBOX HOUSE IN THE NEW ENGLAND COASTAL TOWN OF SEAGATE, WAS A LONELY AND EERIE PLACE IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT. BUT DICK COLLINS, THE MUSEUM'S NIGHT WATCHMAN, WAS YOUNG AND STRONG AND UNAFRAID. HE DIDN'T BELIEVE THAT THE MUSEUM WAS HAUNTED BY GHOSTS OF THE OLD SEAFARING DAYS OF THE TOWN -- UNTIL THE NIGHT AN EERILY THIN AND ECHOING VOICE CALLED OUT HIS NAME...

WHAT! RIGHT BEFORE MY EYES, THIS OLD SEA-HAG FIGUREHEAD CHANGED INTO THE LIKENESS OF A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN!

DICK-- BEWARE! BEHIND YOU!

BUT BEFORE DICK COULD WHEEL AROUND...

CRACK!

The Beyond #13, July 1952. Gene Colan. Ace Magazines.

A FEW MINUTES LATER, AS DICK RECOVERED, DAZED...

OOOH! MY HEAD! SAY! YOU'RE THE GIRL WHO TOOK THE PLACE OF THE SEA-HAG ON THE SHIP'S FIGUREHEAD! BUT YOU SEEM ALIVE-- REAL! HOW...?

NO TIME TO ASK QUESTIONS! YOU MUST FOLLOW ME-- HELP ME! MY TIME IN THIS FORM IS LIMITED!

COME, DICK! THEY'RE TAKING ME BACK TO THE SEA OF HORROR! YOU'RE THE ONLY MAN WHO CAN SAVE ME!

WAIT! I--FEEL-- DIZZY!

SHE'S DISAPPEARED IN THE FOG -- IF SHE EVEN EVER EXISTED! THE MORE I THINK OF IT, THE MORE IMPOSSIBLE IT IS! IT MUST HAVE BEEN THAT BLOW ON THE HEAD!

THE SHIP'S FIGUREHEAD IS GONE! SOMEBODY BROKE IN HERE, WHACKED ME OVER THE HEAD, AND STOLE THE FIGURE! BUT WHY? WHAT WOULD ANYBODY WANT WITH THAT?

AH! HERE IS THE HISTORY OF THAT PARTICULAR RELIC! IN 1860, CAPTAIN SILAS BLAND, A BRUTAL SAILING SHIP MASTER, LEFT PORT WITH A CARGO OF GOLD BULLION, AND HIS NEW BRIDE, ILSA. THE SHIP WAS NEVER SEEN AGAIN!

In 1941, this ship's figurehead was found on Seagate Beach. Under one arm was lodged a ship's log, which suggested that the Captain's lovely bride had turned into a witch, at sea, causing terrific storms. As punishment, Bland had lashed her to the prow of the vessel. Presumably, the ship then sank, as there were no more entries. But superstition has it that Ilsa Bland was turned into the wooden ship's figurehead which you'll find exhibited in this museum...

WHAT A LOT OF NONSENSE! THERE NEVER WERE SUCH THINGS AS WITCHES -- AND IT'S IMPOSSIBLE THAT SHE WAS TURNED INTO A FIGUREHEAD! BUT I'LL TAKE A LOOK AT THAT OLD SHIP'S LOG...

BUT AS DICK HUNTED UP THE OLD SHIP'S LOG, HE FOUND PICTURES THAT CAUSED HIM TO WONDER ...

IT-- IT'S THE **SAME** GIRL I SAW BEFORE, WHO SEEMED TO MATERIALIZE OUT OF THAT OLD SEA-HAG SHIP'S FIGUREHEAD--THEN VANISHED WITH IT!

Captain Silas Bland.

Ilsa

BECAUSE OF THE THEFT OF THE FIGUREHEAD, DICK COLLINS WAS FIRED. THE NEXT MORNING...

THAT YACHT'S A BEAUTY! I WONDER WHAT THOSE WORKMEN ARE DOING TO IT?

THE STOLEN FIGUREHEAD!

DICK! DICK COLLINS! HELP ME!

I'M THROUGH WITH THAT WOODEN HORROR! I TOLD YOU I THOUGHT I HEARD IT GROAN WHEN WE DROVE IN THE FIRST NAILS!

THAT THING CERTAINLY DOES AFFECT PEOPLE'S IMAGINATIONS! THAT'S ALL IT WAS! IT **COULDN'T** HAVE CALLED OUT TO ME! ANYHOW, I'M GOING TO GET IT BACK FOR THE MUSEUM AND MAYBE GET MY JOB BACK AGAIN!

SIR, THAT SHIP'S FIGUREHEAD ON THE PROW OF YOUR YACHT WAS STOLEN FROM THE MARINE MUSEUM LAST NIGHT! I'VE COME TO TAKE IT BACK!

YE HAVE, EH, LAD?

SAY! YOU LOOK A LOT LIKE THE PICTURE I SAW OF CAPTAIN SILAS BLAND!

RIGHT! I'M CAPTAIN ENOCH BLAND, A DIRECT DESCENDANT, AND I'VE **GOT** TO **KEEP** THAT FIGUREHEAD! I HAD A DREAM A FEW NIGHTS AGO, IN WHICH MY GREAT GRAND-UNCLE SILAS APPEARED! AND LISTEN TO THIS!

IN THIS DREAM, HE TOLD ME IF I PLACED THE FIGUREHEAD OF HIS OLD WITCH-WIFE ON MY YACHT, IT WOULD LEAD ME TO HIS SUNKEN SHIP--AND THE MILLIONS IN GOLD BULLION ABOARD! KEEP MUM ABOUT THIS, LAD, AND I'LL CUT YOU IN!

YOU MUST BE CRAZY TO BELIEVE A DREAM LIKE THAT! I'M GOING TO REPORT YOUR THEFT TO THE POLICE! I'VE **GOT** TO GET MY JOB BACK!

THAT DREAM WAS SO VIVID, IT'S **GOT** TO BE TRUE! I COULD ACTUALLY **SEE** THE GLITTERING BULLION! SO YOU'RE NOT GOING TO SPOIL MY PLANS, NOW!

OOOH!

CRACK!

IT WAS MANY HOURS LATER THAT DICK RECOVERED FROM THAT VICIOUS BLOW...

WH--WHAT HAPPENED? WHO ARE YOU?

YOU'RE A PRISONER OF CAP'N ENOCH BLAND, ABOARD HIS YACHT! WE'RE OUT TO SEA, AND A ROUGH VOYAGE IT'S GOING TO BE, IF THIS STORM WE'RE RIDING OUT IS ANY SIGN!

HALF AN HOUR LATER...

STORM'S RISEN TO HURRICANE PITCH! I'M GOIN' TOPSIDE TO SEE HOW WE'RE RIDIN' IT! YOU STAY HERE!

AS TIME PASSED, AND THE SHIP WALLOWED MORE DRUNKENLY IN THE HEAVY SEAS, DICK COLLINS RACED UP TO THE DECK, WHERE TO HIS HORROR, HE SAW...

THE CAPTAIN AND THE WHOLE CREW HAVE DESERTED THE SHIP! THEY'VE LEFT ME ABOARD ALL ALONE!

HEY! COME BACK FOR ME!

THAT CRAZY, CACKLING, WITCH-LIKE LAUGHTER! I SWEAR IT'S COMING FROM THAT SEA-HAG FIGUREHEAD ON THE PROW!

HA-HA-HA!
HE-HO-HO!
HO-HO-HA!

THE YACHT HAS RIGHTED ITSELF-- AND IT'S ***TURNING!*** IT'S GAINING SPEED AND IS BEARING DOWN ON THE LIFEBOAT! IT'S GOING TO CRASH IT!

LOOK AT THAT GRINNING, UGLY HAG ON THE FRONT! SHE'S CONTROLLING THE YACHT, I TELL YOU! ***LOOK OUT!***

THE SPEEDING YACHT'S CUT THE LIFEBOAT IN TWO! THEY HAVEN'T A CHANCE OF LIVING THROUGH THIS!

EEEIIYIIEEE!

CRASH!

THE YACHT KEEPS GAINING SPEED! IT'S GOING INCREDIBLY, DIZZYING FAST! I--I CAN HARDLY HOLD ON!

SEVERAL HOURS LATER ...

WHEW! THE STORM'S OVER AND THE YACHT FINALLY SLOWED AND STOPPED! THIS HUGE FIELD OF SEAWEED MUST'VE DONE THE TRICK! ***HEY!*** THERE SEEM TO BE PEOPLE ABOARD THAT OLD SAILING VESSEL!

THIS LIFE RAFT WILL TAKE ME OVER THERE TO INVESTIGATE! JUMPIN' JUDAS! THAT HORRIBLE SEA-HAG FIGUREHEAD HAS VANISHED FROM THE PROW OF THE SHIP!

NO SOUNDS COMING FROM THE SHIP-- YET I KNOW I SAW SIGNS OF LIFE HERE!

ARRRR! HOW HIDEOUS! MEN WHO LOOK LIKE HALF DECOMPOSED WALKING DEAD! WH--WHAT ARE YOU?

OL' CAP'N SILAS BLAND, MATEY, AND HIS STOUT CREW! AND WHO MAY ***YOU*** BE, AND WHAT ARE YE DOING ABOARD MY SHIP?

THE SEA-HAG OF THE MUSEUM FIGUREHEAD! BUT HOW--YOU'RE ALIVE--MOVING! IT'S IMPOSSIBLE!

NOT FOR A WITCH WITH HER POWERS, MATEY! SHE GOT OUR SHIP STRANDED IN THIS SEA OF WEEDS! BECAUSE OF HER SPELL, WE NEVER DIED!

SHE LEFT US YEARS AGO, BUT CAME BACK TONIGHT, FOR SOME STRANGE REASON! JUST IN TIME, TOO! HER SPELL WAS BEGINNING TO WEAR OFF AND WE WERE ALL STARTING TO ROT, TO THE STAGE WE WOULD NOW BE, IF HER POWERS HADN'T PRESERVED US!

PUT THE LAD IN CHAINS SO HE WON'T CAUSE TROUBLE! THEN, CAP'N, TAKE ALL YOUR MEN OVER TO THE YACHT AND BRING BACK PROVISIONS! WE'LL HAVE A FEAST TONIGHT! A CELEBRATION OF MY RETURN!

A LITTLE LATER...

DON'T-- DON'T COME NEAR ME! DON'T TOUCH ME!

HEH! HEH! DON'T BE AFRAID, DICK! I ASKED YOU TO HELP ME, BACK IN THE MUSEUM, AND YOU DID! NOW, I'LL HELP YOU! THE OTHERS HAVE GONE TO THE YACHT!

THERE! YOU'RE FREE AGAIN, NOW, DICK!

WHY HAVE YOU UNCHAINED ME, AFTER ORDERING ME MADE PRISONER? I DON'T UNDERSTAND ANY OF THIS!

I JUST WANTED TO FOOL THEM! YOU'LL SEE WHY, WHEN WE GET TOPSIDE!

SHE--SHE ISN'T HUMAN! SHE CAN'T BE! SHE PASSED RIGHT THROUGH THAT WEB WITHOUT BREAKING IT!

I HATE CAPTAIN BLAND AND HIS WHOLE BRUTAL CREW! IT'S TRUE THAT I HAD WITCH'S BLOOD IN ME, BUT IT DIDN'T BECOME ACTIVE UNTIL CAPTAIN BLAND'S BRUTAL TREATMENT BROUGHT IT OUT!

WHY ARE YOU LOADING THAT CANNON?

I'M GOING TO BLOW CAPTAIN BLAND AND HIS CREW ABOARD THAT YACHT, CLEAR TO HADES! YOU SEE, THE SPELL I CAST OVER THEM AFFECTED **ME** TOO! DESTROYING **THEM** WILL ALSO **RELEASE ME!**

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

AH! HIT THE GASOLINE SUPPLY AND EXPLODED IT! THEY'RE ALL DEAD! I CAN TELL! I CAN FEEL THE CHANGE COMING OVER ME!

BOOM

THE SPELL IS **BROKEN!** NOW, DO YOU STILL SHUDDER TO LOOK AT ME? AND DO YOU REMEMBER ME?

Y--YES! YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL! BUT THIS IS ALL SUCH A SHOCK! MY BRAIN IS WHIRLING!

I'M NOT ONLY BEAUTIFUL, BUT **RICH,** DICK! HELP ME LOAD SOME OF THIS GOLD INTO A LONGBOAT AND WE'LL LEAVE THIS HELL SHIP!

EVEN A SMALL BOATLOAD OF THAT BULLION WILL MAKE US WEALTHY FOR LIFE!

SEVERAL HOURS LATER...

THAT FUSE YOU SET INTO A KEG OF GUNPOWDER FINISHED OFF THE SAILING SHIP! NOW I JUST HOPE YOU CAN LEAD US THROUGH THESE CRAWLING WEEDS, OUT OF THE SEA OF HORROR!

DON'T WORRY, DICK! THERE'S NOTHING BUT HAPPINESS AHEAD FOR BOTH OF US!

BOOM!

BUT ILSA WAS WRONG! AT THE VERY MOMENT THE SHIP, LONG IN THE SEA OF HORROR, WAS BLOWN TO SMITHEREENS...

WHA...? SHE'S **GONE!** NOTHING BUT HER BONES REMAIN! AND I -- I'M ALL ALONE! AND THE BOAT WILL SOON SINK!

EEYAAAAAAHHH!

THE NEXT DAY...

M-- MY BEAUTIFUL ILSA-- AND ALL THAT WONDERFUL GOLD! **GONE! GONE!**

WE FISHED HIM OUT OF THE DRINK, SIR, BUT CAN'T MAKE HEAD OR TAIL OF HIS BABBLINGS! SOMETHING ABOUT GOLD AND A GIRL AND A SEA OF HORROR! GIVES YOU THE CHILLS JUST TO LISTEN TO HIM!

THE END

HORROR at the LIGHTHOUSE!
SOMETHING MOVED IN THE DEEP WATER OFF THE SHOALS BEYOND THE LIGHTHOUSE! A SHAPE SUCH AS NEVER BEFORE SEEN BY MORTAL MAN WAITED IN THE IMPENETRABLE DARKNESS OF THE SEA!
WHY DID IT WAIT? THAT WAS THE QUESTION THAT TERRIFIED LESTER JUNES WHEN HE ARRIVED TO BECOME THE NEW KEEPER OF THE LIGHTHOUSE!

Beware! Terror Tales #6, March 1953. Script: Bill Woolfolk; art: Sheldon Moldoff. Fawcett.

THE CLICK OF THE OAR-LOCKS AND THE DEEP SWISH-SWISH OF OARS IN THE WATER KEPT LESTER JUNES COMPANY AS HE ROWED ACROSS THE SHALLOW WATER OF THE SHOALS TOWARD THE LIGHTHOUSE AT EASTHAM !

THE EASTHAM LIGHTHOUSE WAS A FORBIDDING SIGHT--- LOOMING UP LIKE A BLACK FINGER AGAINST THE MURKY SKY! THE VERY AIR SURROUNDING IT SEEMED TO BE CHARGED WITH SINISTER MALEVOLENCE !

LESTER JUNES BARELY REPRESSED A SHUDDER AS HE KNOCKED UPON THE HEAVY OAKEN DOOR!

WHAT AN EERIE OLD PLACE! BUT IT'S ISOLATED ENOUGH, HEAVEN KNOWS! IT'LL BE JUST THE PLACE FOR THE REST AND QUIET THE DOCTOR SAID I NEED!

KNOCK-KNOCK!

WHO ARE YOU? WHY HAVE YOU COME?

MY NAME IS LESTER JUNES! I'VE JUST BEEN APPOINTED THE NEW KEEPER AT THIS LIGHTHOUSE!

NO! NO! GO AWAY! YOU'RE NOT WANTED HERE!

I'M SORRY! I HAVE A LETTER, CONFIRMING MY APPOINTMENT!

NOTHING PERSONAL, YOU UNDERSTAND! IT'S JUST THAT YOUR SUPERIORS THINK THERE HAVE BEEN TOO MANY SHIPWRECKS NEAR THE LIGHTHOUSE!

THEY THINK I'M NEGLECTING MY DUTIES, EH?

SUDDENLY...

WELL, I'M NOT GOING TO BE PUT OUT! THIS IS MY HOME---AND I'M GOING TO KEEP IT!

JUST A MINUTE...

YOU MUST BE MAD!

AYE---MAD I AM! I'LL KILL YOU RATHER THAN LEAVE THIS PLACE!

THE OLD LIGHTHOUSEKEEPER STRUGGLED WITH DESPERATE FURY! BUT LESTER JUNES WAS YOUNGER, STRONGER ...

ARGH!

YOU WON'T USE THIS GUN ON ANYONE!

IT'S NO WONDER THEY SENT SOMEBODY TO REPLACE YOU, OLD MAN! YOU'RE NOT FIT FOR THE JOB! THE LONELINESS HAS DRIVEN YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND!

IT ISN'T THE LONELINESS, LAD! YOU'LL FIND THAT OUT!

IT WON'T HAVE ANY MORE USE FOR ME IF I GO! I-I'M AFRAID OF WHAT **IT** WILL DO TO ME!

YOU'VE BEEN HAVING HALLUCINATIONS, TOO! SEEING CREATURES THAT DON'T EXIST!

YOU'RE WRONG, LAD! **IT** EXISTS! BUT **IT** WON'T HARM ME AS LONG AS I'M USEFUL! **PLEASE** LET ME STAY!

THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE! YOU'D BETTER PACK YOUR THINGS AND GO AS QUICKLY AS YOU CAN!

THE OLD KEEPER HAD PITIFULLY FEW POSSESSIONS IN THE WORLD! AS HE LOADED THE SMALL BOAT AND PULLED AWAY, LESTER JUNES COULDN'T HELP FEELING SORRY FOR HIM!

POOR OLD FELLOW! IT ISN'T MY FAULT, THOUGH! IF I DIDN'T TAKE HIS PLACE, SOMEONE ELSE WOULD!

AS THE SMALL BOAT REACHED A SPOT NEAR THE SHOALS, LESTER JUNES SAW AN INCREDIBLE SIGHT!

EAHHH!

A GIANT TENTACLE! IT REACHED UP OUT OF THE WATER TO SEIZE THE BOAT!

IN A SECOND NOTHING REMAINED TO MARK THE SPOT WHERE THE KEEPER AND HIS BOAT HAD BEEN!

WHAT I SAW CAN'T BE REAL! *IT CAN'T BE!* I'M JUST HAVING ONE OF THOSE SPELLS THE DOCTOR WARNED ME ABOUT!

THE KEEPER'S BOAT OVERTURNED! THE POOR FELLOW DROWNED! AND-AND THE REST WAS JUST SOME HORRIBLE VISION I CONJURED UP IN MY MIND!

LESTER JUNES ALMOST CONVINCED HIMSELF THAT HE WAS ONLY THE VICTIM OF AN UNRULY IMAGINATION!

AND THEN, LATER THAT EVENING, A VIOLENT KNOCKING SOUNDED AT THE DOOR...

WHO CAN IT BE AT THIS HOUR?

YOU? ... IT CAN'T BE! YOU'RE...

...DEAD!

YOU SAW ME DROWN, DIDN'T YOU? BUT IT SENT ME BACK FOR A TALK WITH YOU!

IT HAS WAYS OF KEEPING US ALIVE---UNTIL IT NEEDS US!

NEEDS US? WHAT FOR?

WHY, FOR **FOOD**, LAD! IT FEEDS ON THE BODIES OF POOR DEVILS WHO ARE SHIP-WRECKED ON THESE SHOALS!

THAT'S WHY IT MADE ME CHANGE THE LIGHTHOUSE BEACON, SO THAT SHIPS WOULD FOUNDER ON THE SHOALS! IT GETS THE DROWNED ONES FOR EATING!

Y-YOU **DELIBERATELY MURDERED** THOSE MEN!

AYE, LAD! I HAD TO DO WHAT IT TOLD ME TO DO OR IT WOULD HAVE GOTTEN ME! JUST AS IT WILL GET YOU, UNLESS YOU DO THE SAME!

THAT'S THE WARNING YOU CAME TO GIVE ME, IS IT?

THIS IS MY ANSWER!

OHHH!

BAM!

LESTER JUNES' BLOW DROVE THE OLD KEEPER BACK THROUGH THE DOOR! IN AN INSTANT, LESTER THREW THE BOLT AND LOCKED IT!

HE CAN'T GET IN NOW!

SLAM!

I TRIED TO WARN YOU, LAD! YOU CAN'T ESCAPE! SOONER OR LATER IT WILL GET YOU, TOO!

THAT WAS THE LAST LESTER JUNES SAW OF THE OLD KEEPER! LATER, WHEN HE CLIMBED TO THE LIGHTHOUSE TOWER AND LOOKED OUT, LESTER HEARD A CHOKED HUMAN CRY AND SAW THE THRASHING OF MIDNIGHT WATER BEYOND THE SHOALS!

CAN THAT THING HE SPOKE OF HAVE CAPTURED HIM AGAIN?

SOMETIMES, AT NIGHT, LESTER WOULD WAKEN, THINKING THAT HE HEARD THAT AWFUL THRASHING IN THE WATER AGAIN! BUT THERE WAS NO SIGN OF ANYTHING, NOT EVEN WHEN HE SWEPT THE WATER WITH THE BEACON, SEARCHING FOR IT! AND AT LAST LESTER JUNES PERSUADED HIMSELF THAT NO SUCH CREATURE EXISTED!

THE QUIET, PEACEFUL ROUTINE AT THE LIGHTHOUSE WAS LIKE A TONIC FOR LESTER JUNES! HE COULD FEEL THE EASING OF TENSION WITHIN HIMSELF, AS ONE DAY FOLLOWED ANOTHER IN AN UNEVENTFUL PATTERN...

THIS IS THE LIFE!

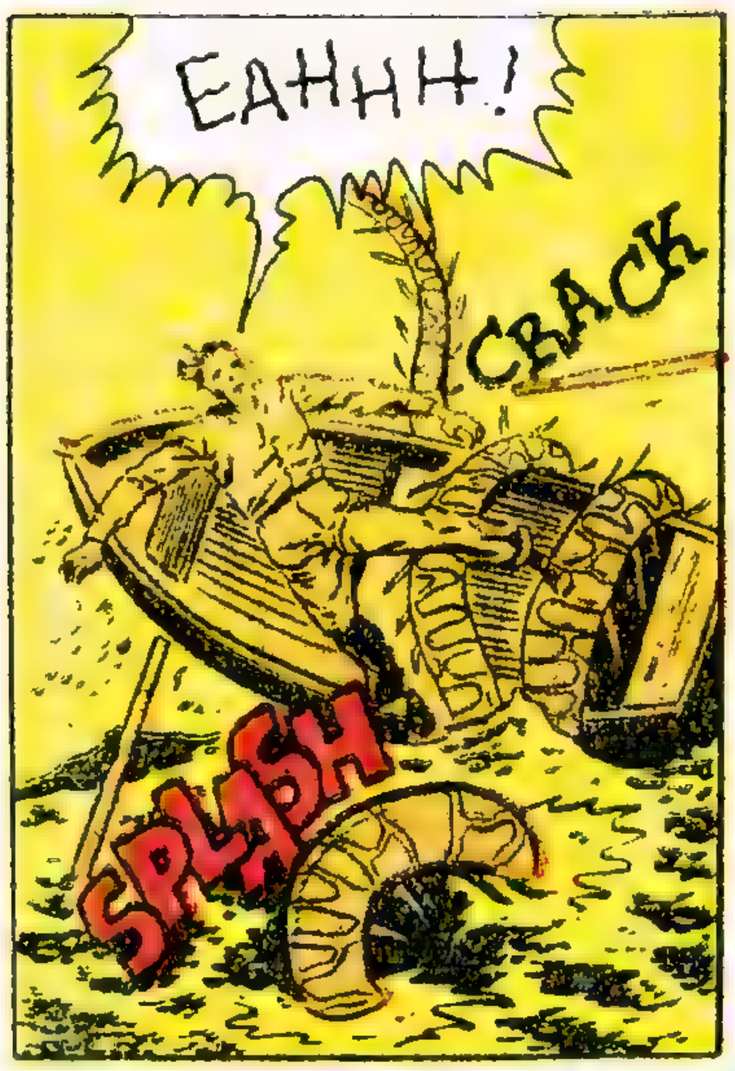
A FEW SIMPLE CHORES TO DO, AND I CAN SPEND THE REST OF THE DAY FISHING! I HATE TO THINK OF EVER GOING BACK TO THE NOISE AND BUSTLE OF CIVILIZATION!

THE WATER HEAVED UP FROM A MIGHTY CONVULSION! THE WAVES PARTED WITH A HISSING BURST OF FOAM TO REVEAL PART OF A DREAD SHAPE OF NIGHTMARE! THE SCREAM THAT ROSE TO LESTER JUNES' LIPS CHOKED IN A GASP OF TERROR!

WH-WHAT'S THAT?

SPLASH

THE THING!



FOR A MOMENT LESTER JUNES STRUGGLED, AS A TENTACLE SEIZED HIM.

DOWN THROUGH THE COOL GREEN DEPTHS OF THE WATER THE TENTACLE DRAGGED LESTER JUNES IRRESISTIBLY, WHILE LIFE BUBBLED AWAY THROUGH HIS NOSE AND THROAT!

THAT WAS HIS LAST CONSCIOUS THOUGHT, UNTIL HE WAKENED IN DARKNESS TO SEE A QUEER GLOWING LIGHT.

THERE WAS NO WATER HERE! HE WAS SHIELDED BY SOME KIND OF TRANSPARENT WALL, AND STARING THROUGH IT HE COULD MAKE OUT WHAT THE GLOWING LIGHT REALLY WAS.

GRADUALLY, AS HE BECAME ACCUSTOMED TO THE DARKNESS, LESTER JUNES MADE OUT THE REST OF THE MONSTROUS FIGURE THAT WAS WATCHING HIM WITH THE IMPERSONAL CURIOSITY OF A SCIENTIST REGARDING AN INSECT...

YOU ARE FRIGHTENED, MORTAL? BUT YOU ARE ALIVE! IF YOU DO AS I SAY, YOU MAY **CONTINUE** TO LIVE!

MY GLASS CAGES ARE EMPTY! YOU ARE MY ONLY CAPTIVE! I MUST HAVE **OTHER HUMANS** TO FEED ON!

YOU WANT ME TO CHANGE THE BEACON AT THE LIGHTHOUSE---TO GUIDE OTHER SHIPS ONTO THE SHOALS! I'LL NEVER DO IT! ***NEVER!***

VERY WELL, THEN! YOU HAVE CHOSEN! **YOU** WILL ABATE MY HUNGER---FOR A LITTLE WHILE!

A WRITHING TENTACLE LIFTED THE TOP OF THE GLASS CAGE! STRUGGLING WILDLY, LESTER JUNES WAS LIFTED TOWARD THE GAPING JAW.

HE'S GOING TO DEVOUR ME! ***NO!***

A SICKENING HORROR SWEPT THROUGH EVERY NERVE IN LESTER JUNES' BODY! HE COULD NOT UTTER A SOUND AS HE WAS CARRIED TOWARD HIDEOUS DOOM!

BUT HIS MIND FLASHED A FRANTIC THOUGHT...

I DON'T WANT TO DIE LIKE THIS! I'LL DO ANYTHING---***ANYTHING!***

ABRUPTLY!

HUH? IT'S LIFTING ME CLEAR OF THE WATER!

WHOOSH

IT PUT ME SAFELY DOWN HERE! BUT WHY? WHY DID IT CHANGE ITS MIND?

LIKE A POWERFUL PULSEBEAT, THE THOUGHT IMPRESSION CAME CLEARLY INTO LESTER JUNES' BRAIN!

WE HAVE MADE A BARGAIN! YOU WILL LIVE---AS LONG AS YOU SERVE ME FAITHFULLY!

THAT WASN'T MY VOICE! IT IS TELEPATHIC! IT CAN READ THOUGHTS AND--AND TRANSMIT THEM TO OTHERS!

LESTER JUNES RETURNED TO HIS LIGHT-HOUSE POST! AND A FEW NIGHTS LATER, AS A SMALL YACHT MOVED IN CLOSE TO THE SHOALS...

THAT SHIP WILL BE WRECKED IF IT CONTINUES ON ITS COURSE!

I CAN SAVE THEM BY CHANGING THE BEACON LIGHT, AND WARNING THEM AWAY FROM THE SHOALS! BUT DO I DARE? *DO I DARE?*

SUDDENLY...

KRASSHH!

THE WHOLE BOTTOM OF THE YACHT WAS RIPPED OUT BY THE SHOCK OF THAT TERRIBLE IMPACT! THEN, THE SEA HISSED ANGRILY, AND HIDEOUS TENTACLES APPEARED TO CLAIM THEIR PREY!

LESTER JUNES TURNED THE BEACON LIGHT UPON THE DREADFUL SCENE AND WATCHED WITH FASCINATED HORROR...

THAT'S THE LAST OF THEM!

NOT ONE SURVIVED! THERE WON'T BE ANYONE TO TELL WHAT HAPPENED! I-I HOPE THE MONSTER'S APPETITE WILL BE ABATED FOR A WHILE!

BUT THE MONSTER WAS RAVENOUS! AND IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED...

FISHING BOAT SINKS ON SHOAL WITH HEAVY LOSS OF LIFE! INVESTIGATION OF DISASTER DEMANDED

THEY'RE DEMANDING AN INVESTIGATION! THEY WANT TO KNOW WHY FOUR SMALL BOATS HAVE CRACKED UP ON THE SHOALS WITHOUT ANY SURVIVORS!

THEY WOULDN'T BELIEVE THE TRUTH, EVEN IF I TOLD THEM! THEY'D THINK I WAS INSANE! THEY'D FIND ME GUILTY OF MURDERING THOSE POOR SHIPWRECKED MEN!

SO I'LL TELL THEM THEY WERE ALL ACCIDENTS! THEN THEY'LL BLAME ME! THEY'LL SEND SOMEONE TO REPLACE ME HERE AT THE LIGHTHOUSE, JUST AS I REPLACED THE FORMER KEEPER!

WHEN THAT HAPPENS, IT WILL HAVE NO MORE USE FOR ME! IT WILL TAKE ME BACK! WHAT CAN I DO? I DON'T WANT TO BE EATEN ALIVE!

HEH, HEH! WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE EATEN ALIVE?

The DEMON of the DEEP

YOU MEAN WE CAN'T FIND A BOAT **ANYWHERE** TO TAKE US AROUND THE BAY FOR A FEW HOURS? THIS PLACE IS RIGHT ON THE SEA--- HOW COME THERE AREN'T ANY VESSELS PUTTING OUT?

YOU HAVE MUCH TO LEARN ABOUT THIS TOWN! THERE ARE OTHERS ALONG THE COAST--- CROWDED WITH WHITE SAILS--- FREE FROM FEAR--- WHY DID YOU HAVE TO COME **HERE**?

*WHAT IS THE SECRET TERROR THAT OVER-HANGS A SMALL MEDITERRANEAN VILLAGE? THE LIVING KNOW, BUT FEAR TO SPEAK--- AND WHEN THE **DEAD** SPEAK ---THEIR SOULS BELONG TO*

The DEMON of the DEEP!

WHY NOT? THESE WATERS ARE RELATIVELY SHALLOW ---MAKING IT JUST THE SPOT FOR THE SPORT WE'RE INTERESTED IN ---UNDERWATER FISHING WITH OXYGEN MASKS AND SPEAR GUNS!

LOOK, KEN! THERE'S A BOAT NOW--- ***BUT IT'S COVERED WITH BLACK BUNTING!***

TWO OF OUR SAILORS WERE FOOLHARDY ENOUGH TO LEAVE PORT LAST NIGHT! THERE IS THEIR SHIP---THOSE ARE THEIR MOURNING WIVES AND FRIENDS!

YOU MEAN THEY ***DROWNED***? BUT THE SEA WAS CALM LAST NIGHT--- THE SHIP'S INTACT--- HOW COULD IT HAVE HAPPENED?

THE DEMON OF THE DEEP! SCOFF IF YOU WILL--- BUT FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR SOULS---***STAY AWAY FROM THE SEA!***

Adventures Into The Unknown #30, April 1952. King Ward. ACG.

KEN···LET'S LEAVE THIS PLACE! THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT THE ATMOSPHERE THAT MAKES ME SHIVER!

JUST BECAUSE TWO MEN WHO WERE EXPERT SWIMMERS SINCE CHILDHOOD VANISHED FROM AN UNDAMAGED VESSEL···WITH THE SEA QUIET AS A MILLPOND? SURE, IT SEEMS WEIRD···AND THAT'S WHY I WANT TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF IT!

HOURS LATER···WITH THE FOAMING RUSH OF THE SEA SOUNDING IN THE DISTANCE···BRENDA TOSSES THROUGH A HAUNTING NIGHTMARE!

I CAN SEE TWO BODIES···THEY'RE PITCHING···PITCHING ON THE MOONLIT WAVES!

AND LIKE A MOURNER AT A WAKE···A LONELY GULL SEEMS TO TAKE UP THE WELLING CHANT OF THE SEA!

THE DEMON··· THE DEMON··· THE DEMON OF THE DEEP!

AT THE INSTANT BRENDA AWAKENS···

KEN! HURRY··· HURRY!

GREAT GUNS! IT'S BRENDA···AND SHE SOUNDS AS IF SHE'S SCARED OUT OF HER WITS!

LOOK! WHO ARE THEY? WHAT ARE THEY DOING HERE?

THOSE ARE TWO INTERESTING QUESTIONS, BABY··· AND I'D BETTER GET THE ANSWERS *FAST!*

WE MEANT NO HARM, *SIGNORI!* WE HAVE HEARD AT SEA THAT YOU WANT A BOAT!

WE KNOW THE SHIFTING TIDES AND THE STILL CURRENTS OF THE NIGHT! *WE ARE READY TO SAIL!*

I KNEW THAT SUPERSTITION ABOUT THE DEMON OF THE DEEP WAS A LOT OF NONSENSE, HONEY! THERE'S A FULL MOON TONIGHT---JUST WHAT WE NEED FOR A LOOK AROUND THE BAY!

I---I CAN'T SAY I'M WILD ABOUT THE IDEA, KEN---BUT IF YOU THINK IT'LL BE ALL RIGHT---

WE'LL MEET YOU AT THE WATERFRONT IN A FEW MINUTES! WHAT'S THE NAME OF YOUR SHIP?

THE BIANCA! WE WILL BE WAITING!

A MOMENT LATER---

KEN---HERE'S SOMETHING STRANGE! THE CLOTHES THOSE MEN WERE WEARING DIDN'T APPEAR TO BE WET---BUT LOOK AT THESE DAMP SPOTS---EXACTLY WHERE THEY WERE STANDING!

SAILORS ARE BOUND TO GET WET, BRENDA! DIDN'T THEY SAY THEY JUST CAME IN FROM THE SEA---AND THAT THEIR SHIP'S WAITING?

GOOD HEAVENS---DO YOU REMEMBER THE NAME OF THEIR SHIP? IT'S THE BIANCA---THE VERY CRAFT WE SAW AT THE WHARF TODAY---DRAPED IN BLACK FOR THE TWO SAILORS WHO DROWNED AT SEA!

THAT'S WHY THEY SPOKE SO ODDLY ABOUT TIDES AND CURRENTS! THEY'VE BEEN FLOATING OUT THERE---JUST AS I DREAMED THEY WERE---TWO DEAD MEN WHO LEFT THE SEA TO LOOK FOR US!

IT'S A TOUGH THING TO FACE, BRENDA---BUT SHOULDN'T WE LEARN WHY? LET'S WEAR OUR SWIMSUITS UNDER OUR CLOTHES---AND TAKE ALONG THE OXYGEN MASKS! THAT WAY, WE CAN JUMP OVERBOARD IF WE HAVE TO---BUT WE'LL LEARN ONCE AND FOR ALL ABOUT THE DEMON OF THE DEEP!

SOON AFTERWARD---GLIDING LIKE A GHOST IN THE BURNISHED MOONLIGHT---

KEN---IT'S SO STRANGE! THE BOAT ISN'T MAKING A SOUND---AND NEITHER ARE THEY!

THAT'S UNDERSTANDABLE! WHETHER DEAD OR ALIVE---SAILORS AREN'T IN THE HABIT OF TALKING MUCH!

NOT EVEN TO ASK WHERE WE'RE GOING? WHY WOULDN'T THEY, KEN---UNLESS THEY KNOW WHERE THEY'RE TAKING US?

A MILE BEYOND...

I DON'T LIKE THIS! WE'RE HEADING STRAIGHT TOWARD THAT WEIRD, GLOWING HAZE RISING FROM THE WATER!

MAYBE WE'D BETTER SLIP ASTERN JUST TO BE ON THE SAFE SIDE...AND LET THE SHIP TOW US!

MINUTES LATER...

THAT LUMINOUS MIST MEANS *SOMETHING*, BRENDA...BECAUSE THE SHIP'S SLACKENING SPEED!

THERE'S WHAT'S CAUSING THE GLOW! *LOOK...LOOK ...THEY'RE FLOATING TOWARD THE SURFACE!*

INCH BY INCH...RISING LIKE HUGE PEARLY BUBBLES FROM THE GLEAMING DEPTHS...

AS THE SHIMMERING SPHERES REACH THE SURFACE...

GOOD LORD, KEN...WHAT'S *INSIDE THEM?*

DEMON OF THE DEEP...WE HAVE BROUGHT TWO HUMANS TO TAKE OUR PLACE BELOW!

KEEP YOUR PROMISE...AND RELEASE OUR SOULS!

AS THE BUBBLE DISSOLVES IN A FLASH...

WE LURED THEM ABOARD...WE SINGLED THEM OUT FOR *YOU!*

BELIEVE US...AND BE MERCIFUL!

WHERE ARE THESE HUMANS? DO YOU THINK YOU CAN ESCAPE MY CURSE WITH A TRICK LIKE *THIS?*

FIVE HUNDRED YEARS AGO, WHEN YOUR ANCESTORS DROWNED ME AS A WIZARD WITH AN ANCHOR AROUND MY NECK...WHO SHOWED MERCY *THEN?* I MADE A VOW THAT THOSE WHO MOCK ME SHALL *DROWN*...AND BECOME THINGS LIKE *THEM!*

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IMPS OF THE DEEP···RISE! THEY BELONG TO US!

AAAGH!

GOOD HEAVENS···THOSE HORRIBLE THINGS ARE RETURNING TO THE DEPTHS··· WITH THE CORPSES!

HERE'S OUR CHANCE TO USE THE OXYGEN MASKS, HONEY···AND FOLLOW THOSE CREEPS DOWN!

THEN, THROUGH THE AMBER FATHOMS ···HEAVY WITH THE SILENCE OF NEARING HORROR···

I WONDER WHETHER BRENDA'S SPOTTED WHAT'S AHEAD OF US···SOMETHING LIKE A TREMENDOUS BUBBLE ON THE FLOOR OF THE SEA!

THE FIENDS ARE GLIDING THROUGH ···TAKING THEIR CAPTIVES WITH THEM!

INCREDIBLE···BUT IT'S A HUGE WATER-TIGHT COMPARTMENT! THERE MUST BE AIR RISING FROM AN OUTLET IN THE OCEAN FLOOR···WITH ENOUGH PRESSURE TO HOLD BACK THE SEA!

KEN'S GOT TO SEE THIS! SOMETHING'S HAPPENING TO THE TWO CORPSES ···THEY'RE WRITHING IN AGONY!

HA! YOU FEARED FOR YOUR SOULS···BUT DID YOU SUSPECT WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO YOUR BODIES?

AAAGH!

AS THE NEW FIENDS JOIN THE RANKS OF DOOM···

FOR CENTURIES, MY DEN OF THE DEEP HAS BEEN CHARGED WITH AN ATMOSPHERE OF EVIL···AND THAT IS WHAT IT DOES TO THE BODIES OF MY VICTIMS! NOW YOU WILL KNOW THE HALF-LIFE IN WHICH THERE IS ONLY ONE DESIRE···A VICTIM CRESTED WITH FOAM AND STREWN WITH SEAWEED···A VICTIM WHO HAS DROWNED!

SUDDENLY---

YE GODS--- THEY'VE SPOTTED US!

YARRRGH!

HUMANS! PURSUE THEM THROUGH THE DEPTHS--- DRAG THEM BACK--- SHOW THEM WHAT IT MEANS TO VENTURE HERE!

THEY'RE COMING THROUGH! THIS IS GOING TO BE CLOSE!

SECONDS LATER---

THEY'RE JUST BELOW US, KEN --- WE CAN'T ESCAPE!

WE'RE ONLY A SHORT DISTANCE FROM THE SHIP! COME ON --- WE'VE GOT TO REACH THAT ROPE TRAILING ASTERN!

Then --- CHURNING THE WATER IN A DESPERATE RUSH---

HOLD ON, HONEY --- WE'RE PICKING UP SPEED!

AS THE FIENDISH ORBS RECEDE IN THE DARKNESS---

WE'VE ESCAPED --- BUT FOR HOW LONG? THE SEA GIRDLES THE WORLD, KEN --- THE DEMON OF THE DEEP IS SURE TO FIND US!

THERE'S ONLY ONE THING TO DO! WE'LL MOVE INLAND, AWAY FROM THE SEA --- UNTIL WE FIND SOME WAY TO DEAL WITH THAT CREEP --- AND END HIS CURSE!

The FOLLOWING EVENING---

SEEMS LIKE A SCREWBALL DREAM NOW, DOESN'T IT --- WITH THE SEA MILES BEYOND OUR SIGHT AND HEARING?

IT'S WONDERFUL TO HAVE LAND ALL AROUND US! BUT DID YOU NOTICE THAT STRANGE-LOOKING CAVE, KEN?

EVEN FROM A DISTANCE, IT LOOKED FORBIDDING--- A PURPLE MASS GLARED BY THE FADING SUN!

LET'S SEE WHAT THE INNKEEPER KNOWS ABOUT THE CAVE, BRENDA!

NO, SIGNOR---NONE OF US *WISH* TO KNOW ANY-THING ABOUT A PLACE LIKE *THAT*! CAN YOU BLAME US---WHEN IT IS CALLED *THE GROTTO OF DEATH*?

WHAT PUZZLES *ME* IS THAT FOG---WHEN THE ATMOSPHERE IS PER-FECTLY CLEAR EVERY-WHERE ELSE!

AS DARKNESS FALLS IN A RUSHED WAVE---AND THE DISTANT HAZE AROUND THE GROTTO OF DEATH FLOWS LIKE A HEAVING TIDE---

FIRST IT WAS *THE DEMON OF THE DEEP*---AND NOW *THE GROTTO OF DEATH*! KEN, IT'S HARD TO EXPRESS WHAT I FEEL---BUT I'LL TELL YOU WHAT THAT FOG REMINDS ME OF---*THE SEA*!

STRANGE WHAT THE IMAGINATION WILL DO! I GET THE SAME IMPRESS-ION WHEN I LOOK UP THERE---IT'S ALMOST AS IF I CAN *HEAR* THE HISSING RUSH OF THE WAVES ---*AND YET I KNOW IT'S NONSENSE!*

BUT EVEN THEN---OUT OF THE FUMING WHITENESS---

LATER---

KEN, DON'T THINK I'M CRAZY---JUST LET'S GET AWAY FROM HERE! THERE'S A TOUCH OF BRINY TERROR IN THE AIR---*LIKE EVIL FLOWING CLOSER!*

WHERE'LL WE GO? OUT THERE ---IN THE DARK-NESS? LET'S KEEP OUR HEADS, HONEY ---BECAUSE WHATEVER IT IS---*WE'LL HAVE TO FACE IT!*

SUDDENLY---IN A SWIRL OF TERROR---

ARRRGH!

THEM---FORCED TOWARD THE EVIL-LADEN FOG---

KEN! THEY'RE TAKING US UP THERE---*TO THE GROTTO OF DEATH!*

I CAN GUESS WHY---*IT'S THE NATURAL TUNNEL THAT CARRIES AIR TO THE DEN OF DOOM!* NO USE TRYING TO RESIST THESE FIENDS *NOW*, BRENDA ---BUT AS SOON AS THEIR ATTENTION SLACKENS ---*WE'LL TRY TO MAKE A BREAK!*

I CAN'T BREATHE IN THIS PLACE!

THAT'S BECAUSE THE AIR IS HEAVILY CHARGED WITH FIREDAMP--- A POISONOUS GAS! I'M BEGINNING TO SEE WHY NO NATIVE WHO'S VENTURED INTO THE CAVE HAS EVER LIVED LONG ENOUGH TO DISCOVER WHERE IT LEADS!

DEEP INSIDE THE ECHOING CHASM---

THE FUMES ARE MAKING ME DIZZY! WE'LL NEVER GET AWAY!

LOOK! I WAS WONDERING HOW THEY KEPT THE FIREDAMP FROM FLOWING INTO THE DEN OF THE DEEP---AND THERE'S THE ANSWER! THERE MUST BE AIR SEEPING THROUGH ROCK FISSURES FURTHER AHEAD---AND THAT PIVOTING BOULDER ACTS AS A SEAL!

WITH A SUDDEN LEAP---

QUICK BRENDA ---GET TO ONE SIDE!

THIS'LL HOLD 'EM UNTIL WE GET OUT--- AND IT BETTER BE FAST!

WHOOOSH!

CRASH!

WHAT NOW, KEN? WON'T THEY COME AFTER US?

MAYBE--- BUT IT WON'T BE SOON ENOUGH! WE'RE HIGH ENOUGH TO OVERLOOK THE SEA--- AND I'VE GOT A HUNCH THERE'LL BE PLENTY TO WATCH!

SECONDS LATER---RISING IN A WHITE-HOT FLASH FROM THE BOILING DEPTHS---

BOOM!

I CAN STILL FEEL THE HEAT WAVES BLOWING IN FROM THE SEA, KEN! THAT TREMENDOUS BLAST VAPORIZED THE DEMON OF THE DEEP AND HIS FIENDS--- BUT WHAT CAUSED IT?

A HIGH CONCENTRATION OF FIREDAMP IS EXPLOSIVE WHEN IT MIXES WITH AIR, HONEY---AND THAT'S JUST WHAT HAPPENED WHEN THE GAS FLOWED THROUGH THE NARROW TUNNEL LEADING TO THE UNDERSEA CHAMBER! IT TOOK SOMETHING ALMOST AS VIOLENT AS AN ATOMIC BOMB--- BUT THOSE CREEPS ARE FINISHED!

The END

Tyrant Lizard Kings
EMPIRE